



# Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

Children's Trust Fund of Washington

## Investment in Prevention

The Washington Council for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (WCPCAN) serves as the identified state lead for the prevention of child abuse and neglect in Washington. We believe this is some of the most important work that the state can do. Investing in effective child abuse and neglect prevention pays the highest dividends in the results we want: healthy children succeeding in school, becoming productive workers, and someday raising strong families of their own.

By thinking of prevention as a viable investment strategy for the future of Washington, we all save by creating brighter tomorrows for individuals, families and the state.

Abuse and neglect affects thousands of Washington's children each year. The link between adverse childhood experiences and negative impacts later on in life has been well documented.

While 61,274 of Washington's children were involved in referrals accepted by Child Protective Services for investigation in 2003, research has also affirmed the effectiveness of carefully targeted, well implemented prevention programs.

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**"We have to recognize adverse childhood experience as a very important component of adult health."**

*Maxia Dong, medical epidemiologist,  
U.S. Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention, HealthDay,  
9/20/2004*

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Prevention is cost effective – a point made in the 2004

Washington State Institute for Public Policy Report *The Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth*: **"There is credible evidence that certain well-implemented programs can achieve significantly more benefits than costs."**

Implementation of effective prevention programs is in fact the only way to avoid the costs that increasingly drain public coffers: foster care, crime, school failure, substance abuse and health/mental health care. And, prevention is something taxpayers would like to see more of. A recent poll in Washington State found that more than 60% of voters support increasing funding for child abuse prevention.

For every \$1 the state spends on preventing child abuse and neglect, at least \$321 is spent each year on after-the-fact interventions like foster care. But this is just the tip of the iceberg. The true cost of child abuse and neglect is seen across the board in spending to address the results: crime, substance abuse, mental illness, disease and school failure. As a percentage of the amount the state spends each year on these items, prevention's share is so small as to be almost invisible.

**The share may be small, but the stakes couldn't be higher.**

**Investing in effective prevention is the right investment strategy for Washington.**